

**CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION**

1516 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, California 95814

Main website: [www.energy.ca.gov](http://www.energy.ca.gov)



## **Notice of Public Scoping Meetings on the Bureau of Land Management & Department of Energy Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement**

The California Energy Commission (Energy Commission), a cooperating agency to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM), invites the public to comment and offer suggestions at meetings on the scope of a solar energy programmatic environmental impact statement (Solar PEIS). The BLM and DOE are jointly preparing this Solar PEIS as a prelude to permitting or sponsoring large-scale solar electricity-generating installations in the Western U.S., including the Southern California desert.

The public scoping meetings in California will be held:

**MONDAY, JUNE 16, 2008**

**6 p.m. – 10 p.m.**

**Courtyard by Marriott, Riverside  
1510 University Ave  
Riverside, CA 92507  
(Wheelchair Accessible)**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2008**

**6 p.m. – 10 p.m.**

**City of Barstow Council Chambers  
220 East Mountain View, Ste. A  
Barstow, CA 92311  
(Wheelchair Accessible)**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2008**

**6 p.m. – 10 p.m.**

**Hilton Sacramento Arden West  
2200 Harvard Street  
Sacramento, CA 95815  
(Wheelchair Accessible)**

PLEASE NOTE: If you are planning to attend the Sacramento meeting, please be aware that there may be traffic congestion and delays due to repair work on Interstate 5 in the downtown Sacramento area.

Information on road closures and alternate routes is available at the Fix I-5 website at <http://www.fixi5.com>, or call 5-1-1 to receive information in English and Spanish.

Other public scoping meetings will be held in the following Western states: Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

## **Purpose and Scope**

The BLM and DOE are evaluating whether installations of large-scale solar electric power plants on public lands could be facilitated by developing agency-specific programs that establish environmental policies and mitigation strategies for this solar development. The BLM would apply the policies and strategies resulting from the Solar PEIS when deciding to issue rights-of-way for solar projects on BLM-managed land. The DOE's Solar Energy Technologies Program would apply its policies and strategies when choosing to provide financial sponsorships (such as grants) for solar projects installed on BLM-managed or other lands in six Western states.

The purpose of these public scoping meetings is to solicit comments and suggestions about the scope and contents of the Solar PEIS. The Solar PEIS will evaluate three alternative approaches to solar energy development:

- No Action
- Facilitated Development
- Limited Development

Under the No Action alternative, the BLM and DOE would continue to evaluate solar energy project proposals on a case-by-case basis. For the Facilitated Development alternative, the agencies intend to create a 20-year forecast of reasonably foreseeable solar energy development. The Limited Development alternative will evaluate the potential impacts of previously proposed solar energy projects that still await BLM approval. Public comments on the scope will help refine the alternatives and focus the analyses on priority resource impacts. The BLM also seeks feedback on specific, proposed resource-management planning criteria.

With the results from the Solar PEIS, the agencies intend to establish siting criteria and best management practices which would minimize potential impacts to natural and cultural resources. The PEIS will also consider whether new transmission corridors are needed on BLM-managed land to interconnect solar electric facilities to the grid.

The Solar PEIS will not include lands within National Conservation Areas, National Monuments, Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Historic and Scenic Trails. Lands within the California Desert Conservation Area that are not further designated by any of the above categories (such as Wilderness Area) are included in the Solar PEIS. Furthermore, the Solar PEIS will not include lands that the BLM previously identified in its land use plans as environmentally sensitive, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

The purpose of the Solar PEIS is not to eliminate the need for site-specific environmental review for individual solar development proposals. Once the Solar PEIS has been completed, these site-specific reviews will determine whether the projects' plans of development follow the best management practices and mitigation strategies prescribed in the Solar PEIS. Until the Solar PEIS is completed, the BLM will continue

to process existing solar energy applications on a case-by-case basis, but it will not accept any new applications for solar energy rights-of-way.

## **Background**

The federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 directed the Secretary of Interior to plan for installing on public lands at least 10,000 megawatts of electricity generating facilities that use renewable energy resources, including solar energy. These public lands include those managed by the BLM according to area-specific plans, such as the California Desert Area Conservation Plan. Through solar resource assessments, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory mapped California's and other Western states' areas with high solar energy development potential.

The BLM currently processes applications for rights-of-way to install transmission grid-connected solar electricity generating facilities under its 2007 Solar Energy Development Policy. Through this Solar PEIS, the BLM is considering whether to supplement or replace this policy and to amend affected land use plans.

The Energy Commission conducts environmental reviews and licenses all thermal electric power plants in California with output capacities of 50 megawatts or greater, including solar thermal power plants. Currently, three applications to build solar thermal power plants are under review. The Energy Commission and the BLM conduct joint environmental reviews of large solar thermal power plants proposed on BLM-managed lands. The roles and responsibilities of the Energy Commission and BLM with respect to jointly reviewing solar thermal power plants are defined in a Memorandum of Understanding that can be viewed at the following link:  
[http://www.energy.ca.gov/siting/solar/BLM\\_CEC\\_MOU.PDF](http://www.energy.ca.gov/siting/solar/BLM_CEC_MOU.PDF).

The Energy Commission also has authority to plan and designate electric transmission corridors, including those needed to access renewable energy facilities in California.

## **Public Participation and Comments**

The scoping process is intended for all interested agencies, public interest groups, Native American tribal governments, the solar energy industry, electric utilities, and members of the public. Comments may address broad or resource-specific issues, such as wildlife, vegetation, soils, hydrology, air quality, water use, land use, visual resources, socio-economic, archeology, paleontology, and outdoor recreation.

The public scoping period began on May 29, 2008, with publication of a "Notice of Intent to Prepare a [PEIS] to Evaluate Solar Energy Development, Develop and Implement Agency-Specific Programs, Conduct Public Scoping Meetings, Amend Relevant Agency Land Use Plans, and Provide Notice of Proposed Planning Criteria" in the Federal Register.<sup>1</sup> The public scoping comment period will continue through July 7, 2008.

Parties may submit written comments electronically, using the form provided on the project's website at <http://solareis.anl.gov> (the preferred method) or by mail to this address: Solar Energy PEIS Scoping, Argonne National Laboratory, 9700 S. Cass Avenue – EVS/900, Argonne, Illinois 60439.

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<sup>1</sup> See Federal Register, May 29, 2008, at [<http://frwebgate2.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/PDFgate.cgi?WAISdocID=078497438028+0+1+0&WASAction=retrieve>]



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### **Additional Information**

Notices and documents will be posted to the Solar PEIS project website located at <http://solareis.anl.gov>. We encourage those who are interested in receiving electronic notices to sign up for the list server through the project website. When new information is posted, an e-mail will be sent to those on the e-mail list server.

Further information, including answers to questions about how to make comments, may be directed to Lisa Jorgensen, Department of Energy, Golden Field Office, [lisa.jorgensen@go.doe.gov](mailto:lisa.jorgensen@go.doe.gov), (303) 275-4906; or Linda Resseguie, BLM Washington Office, [linda.resseguie@blm.gov](mailto:linda.resseguie@blm.gov), (202) 452-7774.

Date: June 6, 2008

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//signed//  
TERRENCE O'BRIEN  
Deputy Director,  
Energy Facilities Siting Division